

DSMC Reaping the Rewards of AMCEP

“Relevancy Counts in Everything We Do”



Dr. J. Robert "Bob" Ainsley

Dr. J. Robert "Bob" Ainsley is assigned as the full-time Program Manager for the Acquisition Management Curriculum Enhancement Program (AMCEP) and Chair of the Acquisition Management Functional Board/DSMC Special Working Group. In an effort to educate the acquisition and technology workforce on AMCEP and all it embodies, Ainsley spoke with *Program Manager* June 10.

Q

Dr. Ainsley, would you tell us how AMCEP began?

A

In August 1998, the DSMC Commandant, informally established the Acquisition Management Curriculum Enhancement Program (AMCEP) to

posture the college to better support the future acquisition and technology workforce. On Nov. 30, 1998, he published a memorandum officially establishing its purpose, team composition and leadership, reporting chain, and authority. Most importantly, he established the high priority the program has for resources essential to ensure its success by stating that AMCEP "is the college's top curriculum review and revision effort."

Q

What is the primary purpose of AMCEP?

A

AMCEP seamlessly integrates the Acquisition Management Functional Board (AMFB) requirements process and the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) course development and delivery process. It implements a continuous, evolutionary process that facilitates and improves the integrated acquisition management curriculum. In this way, it will ensure that our development programs best prepare the acquisition and technology workforce for the future.

Q

What is the enhancement effort's primary thrust?

A

The effort creates a problem-based learning (PBL) curriculum that replicates actual problems graduates will likely encounter in subsequent assignments. The development of critical thinking skills and the transparent application of information technology enable students to better cope with the challenges they will face. A significant body of research shows that we learn more and retain it longer when we apply information toward the solution of a problem. As we

apply the discipline within the context of a dilemma, we are storing the information in association with certain aspects of the situation. When we are confronted with similar and related problems, we pull from that association. Relevancy counts in everything we do.

Q

You mentioned the AMFB; what is it, and what is its mission?

A

The AMFB advises and supports the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology), developing policies and procedures for civilian and military personnel in Defense Acquisition Management. The AMFB charter clearly establishes the general and specific responsibilities, as well as the authority it exercises. Specifically, the AMFB acts as the subject matter expert on the qualifications and career development requirements for the Program Management career field, including weapon and information systems.

A second prime responsibility of the AMFB is to provide requirements for cross-functional acquisition management generalists, Integrated Product Team (IPT) members from a program, the Service staffs, or the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) staff.

Q

What is your relationship with the AMFB?

A

The AMFB is authorized to establish Special Working Groups (SWG) to perform specific tasks on behalf of the board. We are one of those SWGs and have been jointly chartered by the Chair, AMFB and the DSMC Commandant to seamlessly integrate the AMFB requirements process

with the DAU course development and delivery process, as implemented by DSMC. I am assigned to the Office of the Commandant as the full-time Program Manager of the AMCEP and as the Chair of the AMFB/DSMC Special Working Group. I report administratively to the Provost and operationally to the Senior Steering Group (SSG) for the AMFB/DSMC Special Working Group.

Team members have been selected by me in coordination with the appropriate Deans, and approved by the Provost. Other members will be added as resources permit. Dr. J. Ronald Fox of Harvard University has agreed to serve as an advisor to the team. We have developed event-based schedules, including monthly reviews.



What part does the DAU play?



The DAU develops courses in the acquisition (ACQ) and program management (PMT) course categories in response to requirements generated/validated by the AMFB.

As a member of the DAU consortium of schools, DSMC maintains, modifies, and conducts a number of integrated acquisition management and program management courses developed according to processes promulgated by the President, DAU. These courses are an integral element of a Program of Instruction designed to build upon the knowledge and skills acquired. Classes must be successfully completed in a prescribed sequence. Inherent in the design of the program is the necessity for acquiring on-the-job experience between courses.



What is your first task?



Our initial effort is a review of PMT-302, the Advanced Program Management Course (APMC). Subsequent to the completion of that review and the implementation of the enhancements derived from it, we are to immediately design and implement a continuous, evolu-

"The group [AFMB/DSMC Special Working Group] will act as an IPT, looking for faster, better, and cheaper ways to provide more efficient and effective acquisition management education and training."

tionary process that results in improved integrated acquisition management courses. Incremental improvements identified by group members shall be implemented as an integral part of the standard DSMC course improvement processes through teaming, coordinating, and consulting.



What is your role coordinating the curriculum?



I have primary authority over the review and revision of the integrated curriculum as it relates to AMCEP. I serve as the DSMC integrated curriculum configuration manager. This authority does not usurp or diminish the authority and responsibility of the department chairs and faculty to conduct curriculum reviews

within their respective areas of expertise, or their role in instructional effectiveness and currency.



What are these integrated courses?



They include the Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management Course (FSAMC: ACQ-101); the Intermediate Systems Acquisition Course (ISAC: ACQ-201); the Advanced Program Management Course (APMC: PMT-302); the Executive Program Managers Course (EPMC: PMT-303); and the Program Managers Skills Course (PMSC: PMT-305).



What were the expectations for this group?



The group acts as an IPT, looking for faster, better, and cheaper ways to provide more efficient and effective acquisition management education and training. They use surveys, interviews, and other effective techniques to validate and modify (if required) immediate course requirements and evaluate existing courses for adequacy. An APMC analysis was briefed to the AMFB in February 1999. Immediate modifications were incorporated into the course rapidly in accordance with DAU standards and procedures. The group continues to work issues like these and reports status each month to an SSG.



Is this the story of a successful IPT?



Absolutely! AMCEP, with its IPT relationship with the AMFB, is the college's top curriculum review and revision effort. The necessary resources for AMCEP are negotiated among the appropriate Deans, the Provost, and me. The mediation of resource conflicts and re-setting of the college's resource priorities remain with the Commandant. We have every expectation that we will continue to function as a successful IPT. In fact, through the AFMB, members from the OSD and Service communities are assisting us in

Working Group(s) Composition

The DSMC Commandant, in coordination with the Chair of the AMFB, will select the working group chair to be assigned as the full-time Program Manager. The working group membership will be composed as follows:

- Program Manager (Working Group Chair)
- Select DSMC personnel as approved by the Provost
- A representative nominated by the President of the DAU
- A representative nominated by the AMFB Chair
- Functional board representatives appointed by the AMFB Chair

The Program Manager shall report administratively to the DSMC Provost and operationally to a Senior Steering Group (SSG), with membership composed as follows:

- Chair of the AMFB (SSG Chair)
- President of the DAU
- DSMC Commandant
- Additional membership as appointed by the Chairman of the AMFB.

the development of the problem-solving instructional materials.

For example, members from the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for International and Commercial Programs, U.S. Navy Program Executive Officer for Aviation, and the U.S. Marine Corps Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle Program Office have either written materials

for us or provided significant insight to the credibility and validity of those materials. This stakeholder involvement has helped to ensure ownership into the development of the acquisition and technology workforce.



What are the longer-range goals of the group?

Working Group(s) Tasks

- Identify, select, and obtain approval (when required) of working group members.
- Identify and obtain facilities, resources, and necessary administrative support.
- Design, develop, prototype, conduct, and evaluate future course requirements.
- Obtain approval of course requirements and design.
- Develop event-based schedules before all significant activities, including progress reports to the Senior Steering Group.



The group will identify longer-range requirements for course migration, including but not limited to, course addition, deletion, or change. These requirements will be documented and provided to the AMFB at the conclusion of the review.



How will you know you have succeeded?



Improvements must include an enhanced professionalism, capability, and job performance among graduates of acquisition management courses and program management courses.



What tools will you use?



Course offerings must foster and develop critical thinking, leadership skills and PBL. Guided, self-directed learning and other adult learning educational processes will be applied to the extent practicable and desirable. Of course, acquisition reform initiatives will be incorporated within appropriate course offerings. And industry views and best practices will be incorporated within appropriate course offerings. Case studies will be included in the learning environment to the extent practicable to add experiential learning. We hope to minimize redundancy among the integrated courses. Appropriate technology-based learning systems such as the Defense Acquisition Deskbook and the World-Wide Web will also be incorporated.

Editors Note: The Nov. 30, 1998, memorandum approving concepts and guidelines of the Acquisition Management Curriculum Enhancement Program was jointly approved by John C. Wilson Jr., Director, Systems Acquisition, OSD, and Chair, Acquisition Management Functional Board; and Navy Rear Adm. Leonard Vincent, DSMC Commandant. For further information about AMCEP, contact Dr. Ainsley at ainsleyb@dsmc.dsm.mil or call Commercial (703) 805-4565; DSN 655-4565.